

 Print article now**New York, 27 October 2005 - Statement attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General on the Final Report of the Independent Inquiry Committee on oil-for-food**

The Secretary-General takes note of the findings contained in the fifth and final report of the Independent Inquiry Committee into the Oil-for-Food Programme.

He notes that a vast network of kickbacks and surcharges has been exposed, involving companies registered in a wide range of member states, and certified by them as competent to conduct business under the Programme. He hopes that national authorities will take steps to prevent the recurrence of such practices in the future, and that they will take action, where appropriate, against companies falling within their jurisdiction.

He recalls that, in his speech to the Security Council responding to the Committee's previous report, he already accepted responsibility for management failures in the Secretariat. He also notes that the latest report confirms the Committee's earlier finding that the respective roles and responsibilities of the Secretariat, the Security Council and the 661 Committee – which approved all of the contracts, including the prices – were never clearly enough defined.

Most importantly, the Secretary-General believes that thorough reform of the management structures and practices of the United Nations, especially those that relate to oversight, transparency and accountability, is vital. He has already instituted extensive reforms – including broader and more rigorous financial disclosure requirements, a stronger policy to protect whistleblowers, and a review of all oversight and audit arrangements. He intends to pursue these and other reforms with even greater vigour in the weeks and months ahead, and looks to member states for their support.

Finally, he wishes to thank the members of the Committee – Mr. Paul Volcker, Justice Richard Goldstone and Professor Mark Pieth – and their whole team for the extremely thorough investigation they have conducted. Such an investigation is exactly what the Secretary-General hoped for when he set up the Inquiry 18 months ago. He notes, as Mr. Volcker himself has done, that few other organizations would voluntarily expose themselves and their activities to such detailed scrutiny.<